

The President. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Roger Cardinal Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles.

Exchange With Reporters

January 24, 1994

Secretary of Defense Nominee

Q. Mr. President, how close are you to naming a Defense Secretary?

The President. I think we'll have an announcement today, just in a few hours.

Q. Is Bill Perry your choice, Mr. President?

The President. We'll have an announcement. You can wait and see.

Q. Why do you think it took so long, and what do you account for what seemed to be a reluctance by a number of people to take on the job?

The President. Well, I don't think it has taken that long. I mean, it's been, what, a week—less than a week since Mr. Inman said he didn't want the job.

Q. And at least two people who reportedly have said they weren't interested in the job, and Mr. Perry—

The President. But the stories are basically inaccurate. The only accurate story is the one that I have confirmed, which is that I talked to Senator Nunn during the transition before I became President, based on the fact that he was not only the head of the Senate Armed Services Committee but a longtime personal friend of mine and someone I sought advice from on these matters. And he told me then that he was not interested in being Secretary of Defense. And the only thing I did was to call him back and make sure he had the same position then that he had now.

The job was absolutely not offered to anyone else. Absolutely, categorically, not offered to anyone else. And it wasn't really offered to him. I just said, "Are you still in the same position you were in before?" And he said, "That's right." He said, "I'm doing what I think I should be doing." But he knows, I think—I don't want to overstate it. I think Sam Nunn always knew that if he

were ever interested in that job, that I was very open to that. But—so the decision—then, after that, after it was clear that he was in the same position he was always in, I went about trying to pick a successor. I've done it, and I expect to have an announcement.

Q. Do you think you can twist someone's arm to take it?

The President. No.

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, there have been new calls for air strikes in Bosnia. You talked about that a lot over this past trip to Europe. Can you give us any update? And what about what you said was your resolve to do something about this?

The President. Well, what I said was that NATO should not reaffirm its position unless the circumstances that they set out for bombing, if those circumstances occurred they'd be willing to go forward. Now, I presume you're referring to what was said in the European Parliament yesterday.

Q. And also the President of Bosnia calling for air strikes, too.

The President. Well, the President of Bosnia, yes—but what the NATO leaders, what the others voted for was to leave on the table the proviso that bombing could be done in order to relieve Sarajevo if that were appropriate or to further the U.N. mission by opening the airstrip at Tuzla or, if necessary, to facilitate the transfer of troops from Canadian to Dutch at Srebrenica. Now, that is a very rather narrow NATO mandate.

And what happened was as soon as the meeting was over, it was not clear how strongly or firmly some of them felt about that. But I think it's also clear that the U.N. Secretary General, who has a say in some of those decisions, but not all of them, based on what the international law is now, is still opposed to it. And I don't have any information that leads me to believe that the other NATO allies, that the heads of state as opposed to people in the European Parliament, have changed their mind about whether there should be any bombing at this time. That's all I can tell you.

Q. What about—

The President. Let me say, I believe in general what I've always believed. There's

not going to be a settlement in Bosnia until the sides decide that they have more to gain from signing a peace agreement than by continuing the fighting. And now the government finally has been able to get some arms, even through it was, in my view, unfairly the only side subject to the arms embargo—they've been able to get some weapons. And they appear to be, the Bosnian government, most reluctant to sign a peace agreement at this time. But if they can work out something on access to the sea and protection of Sarajevo and then the Moslem enclaves to the east, perhaps we can still get an agreement. But there will not be—the killing is a function of a political fight between three factions. Until they agree to quit doing it, it's going to continue. And I don't think that the international community has the capacity to stop people within the nation from their civil war until they decide to do it.

Now, there are things we can do to retard it, to keep it within bounds, to keep it within humanitarian limits. And I wouldn't rule out any of those options. But there has been no decision by anybody to enter the war on the side of one of the combatants, which is what some would like. But there has been no decision to do it. They're going to have to make up their own mind to quit killing each other, and the circumstances are, in fact, on the battlefield are somewhat different than they have been for the previous 12 months. But I hope that it means that it's more likely that there can be a settlement, and I still have some hope that that will occur.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:06 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks Announcing the
Nomination of William Perry To Be
Secretary of Defense and an
Exchange With Reporters**

January 24, 1994

The President. Thank you very much, and good afternoon. I want to welcome all of you here, especially the distinguished Members of Congress who are here and the members

of Secretary Perry's family, whom he will introduce later.

One year ago I selected Dr. Bill Perry to serve as my Deputy Secretary of Defense. Today, based on his lifetime of accomplishment and his solid leadership at the Pentagon, I'm proud to announce my intention to nominate him as the next Secretary of Defense.

He has the right skills and management experience for the job. He has the right vision for the job. He has served with real distinction as both Under Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. For years and throughout his service this past year he has been at the cutting edge on defense issues.

Years ago he had a vision of the power of Stealth technology, technology that helped the United States to win the Persian Gulf war and helped save American lives. He's been a leader in reforming the Pentagon's procurement process and improving financial accountability. And I expect he'll have more to say about that today and in the weeks and months ahead.

He's been instrumental in developing a defense budget for the coming fiscal year that protects the readiness of our forces and promotes our aggressive efforts at defense conversion and the development of dual-use technologies and the creation and the preservation of American jobs. And he played an important role in the recent breakthrough to eliminate Ukraine's nuclear weapons.

He brings a broad and valuable background to this job. He has proven experience in the private sector, is chairman, director, and founder of several successful defense-related corporations. He's served in the United States Army. His academic career as a professor of mathematics and engineering has also contributed to our Nation's security. And in every aspect of his work, Bill Perry has earned high respect from members of both parties, in the Congress, in the military, among those who study military strategy, and in the business community.

He's demonstrated leadership, integrity, and a mastery of his field. Time and again, we heard about him what I have come to know personally: Bill Perry is a real pro. You can depend on him. That's why Secretary